

Margaret Markham
146 SOUTH CYPRESS LANE
WESTBURY, LONG ISLAND, NEW YORK
11590

516-ED 3-6452

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Francis Crick, Ph.D.
Kieckhefer Research Professor
Salk Institute
San Diego, California

Dear Dr. Crick:

As one who had long admired you and your work, and had frequent occasion to interview you and report on your accomplishments in the 1950's and 1960's (including one long auto ride shared with you and Harriet Taylor-Ephrussi and others en route from Chicago, where we had all missed a plane connection due to bedeviling fog and had to reach Purdue for its 100th anniversary celebration the next day), I have continued to read with great interest your articles over the years. But I'm completely taken aback by your recent comment in September, 1979, The Sciences, with respect to your rationale for the "problems" of R. Franklin.

Indeed, I wonder if we are even referring to the same scientist, or if you have ever bothered to read Anne Sayre's book. Or, if having done so, you then consider it a gross fabrication from beginning to end. I assure you I do not and neither do many of my colleagues. The record speaks for itself.

I am baffled by your version of the underlying psychodynamics. Are we not all "victims" of the parents we have and the circumstances in which we are unwittingly born? Of course you are right about one point: had Franklin been sufficiently prescient to have chosen other parents her life would have been different. Had she been born not Jewish but Anglican, not affluent but poor (which always makes it easier for others to be patronizing), not female but male, not in an up-tight British society but a more liberal one, the going might have been easier.

As for her not wanting to "share" discoveries with others --if indeed that was the case --then she had lots of company. The number of "careful" scientists, both male and female, who have confessed this to me and given me reasons why, is legion. You may be sure that any time a capable woman refuses "help" from male peers it is for good reason. They have cause to fear cannibalization of their own results. If that's soap opera, so be it.

Most baffling of all, you apparently consider it a handicap to be "too determined to be scientifically sound" and laud shortcuts for their own sake. Alas, had I only had you as an instructor at Radcliffe I might have been able to graduate without so much effort on my part in being thorough and "scientifically sound."

Sincerely.)